



# **The Crucible** by Arthur Miller

**Directed by Scott P. Calhoon**

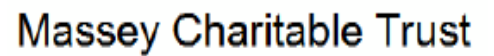
**Resource Guide**

**October 31-Nov 8, 2015**

Prime Stage Education Programming is funded in part by the following:

*Bringing Literature to Life*

- Literacy in Action*
- Student Matinee Field Trips*
- Theatre Mentor/Interns*
- Professional Development*
- Teen Dating Awareness*



## Welcome to Prime Stage Theatre: **Bringing Literature to Life!**

Dear Educator,

Welcome to Prime Stage Theatre's 2015-2016 Season!

We are pleased to bring you *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller, as our first production of the season.

All literature produced by Prime Stage is always drawn from middle and secondary Reading Lists and themes are in the curriculum.

This Resource Guide is designed to provide historical background and context, classroom activities and curricular content to help you enliven your students' experience with the literature and the theatre. We encourage you to use the lessons and creative thinking activities, as well as look over the Theatre Etiquette to spark personal connections with the themes and characters in the story of *The Crucible*.

If you have any questions about the information or activities in the guide, please contact me and I will be happy to assist you and I welcome your suggestions!

Linda Haston, Education Director, Teaching Artist

[lhaston@primestage.com](mailto:lhaston@primestage.com)

**The activities in this guide are intended to enliven, clarify and enrich the text as you read, and the experience as you read and watch the literature.**

### ***Theatre Etiquette and House rules***

Going to a play is a special experience, one that you will remember for a long time.

Everyone in the audience has been looking forward to seeing the performance. The production team put in many long hours and hard work to mount this performance. If you keep in mind common courtesy for the performers as well as your fellow audience members, everyone's theatre experience will be terrific.

A few reminders for attending the theatre.

When you arrive, stay with your group at all times, and wait for the ushers to help you find your seat.

Gum, food, drinks, or candy, are never allowed in the theatre.

Please go to the bathroom before seating for performance or at intermission.

TURN OFF ALL cell phones, pagers, beepers, alarms, anything that can disturb the production, actors and the audience during the performance.

Lights will dim just before a performance and then go dark. Show your knowledge by sitting quietly and calmly.

Do not talk during the performance. The actors on stage can hear you which is why you can hear them so well. Laughter is permissible at appropriate times.

No taking of pictures or video recording is allowed.

Stay in your seat until the cast has taken their curtain call at the end. Show your appreciation by clapping. The actors love to hear applause. This shows how much you enjoyed the performance!

**All Prime Stage productions *and* Resource Guides address the following PA Core Standards:**

***PA Core for *The Crucible****

**CC.1.3.9-10.A:** Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

**CC.1.3.9-10.C:** Analyze how complex characters develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

**CC.1.3.9-10.D:** Determine the point of view of the text and analyze the impact the point of view has on the meaning of the text.

**CC.1.3.9-10.E:** Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it and manipulate time create an effect.

**CC.1.3.9-10.F:** Analyze how words and phrases shape meaning and tone in texts.

**CC.1.3.9-10.G:** Analyze the representation of a subject or a key scene in two different artistic mediums, including what is emphasized or absent in each treatment.

**CC.1.3.9-10.H:** Analyze how an author draws on and transforms themes, topics, character types, and/or other text elements from source material in a specific work.

**CC.1.3.9-10.K:** Read and comprehend literary fiction on grade level, reading independently and proficiently.

**CC.1.5.9-10.A:** Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions on grades level topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

**CC.1.5.9-10.G:** Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English when speaking based on grade 9-10 level and content.

## Quick Plot Overview of *The Crucible*

*The Crucible* an historical play based on events of the Salem witchcraft trials, takes place in a small Puritan village in the colony of Massachusetts in 1692. The witchcraft trials grew out of the particular moral system of the Puritans which promoted interference in others' affairs as well as a repressive code of conduct that frowned on any diversion from what they considered as normal behavior.

The story opens when we see a young girl, Betty, unable to move in her bed and the villagers suspect witchcraft. They don't know that the night before some girls sneaked out to the woods where they made a potion with the help of black slave, Tituba, so Abigail Williams can get the man she loves. However, Abigail went too far and wished death on Elizabeth, the wife of John Proctor. While the girls went crazy, dancing, Abigail's uncle, Reverend Parris, discovers them. This is the *real* reason that Betty is unable to move, *fear*. To protect herself, Abigail turns on people in the village and blames them as witches. Parris sent for Reverend Hale, an expert on witchcraft.

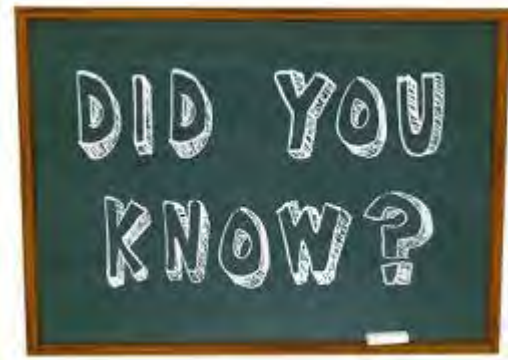


Reverend Samuel Parris

While Parris tries to calm the crowd that has gathered in his home, Abigail talks to some of the other girls, telling them not to admit to anything. John Proctor, a local farmer, enters and talks to Abigail alone. Something that was a secret to everyone in the town, Abigail engaged in an affair with him while working in Proctor's home the previous year. This led to her being fired by his wife, Elizabeth. Abigail desires Proctor and feels they should be together, but John resists her and tells her to end this foolishness and lie.

Reverend Hale examines Betty and quizzes Abigail about the girls' activities in the forest. He grows suspicious of her behavior, and demands to speak to Tituba. After Parris and Hale interrogate her, Tituba confesses to communing with the devil and hysterically accuses various townsfolk of consorting with the devil. Suddenly, Abigail joins her, confessing to having seen the devil conspiring with other townspeople. Betty joins them in naming witches, and the crowd is thrown into an uproar.

The witch hunt which has caused unrest in neighboring towns, comes to Salem. The Deputy Governor Danforth begins the witch trials. Reverend Hale begs the accused witches to confess falsely in order to save their lives, but they refuse. Danforth has an idea: he asks Elizabeth to talk John into confessing, and she agrees. Conflicted, but desiring to live, John agrees to confess, and the officers of the court rejoice. But he refuses to incriminate anyone else, and when the court insists that the confession must be made public, Proctor grows angry, tears it up, and retracts his admission of guilt. Despite Hale's desperate pleas, the accused are sent to the gallows, and the witch trials reach their awful conclusion.



The Salem Witchcraft Trials occurred because of what people believed in the late 1600's. People were obsessed with witches and witchcraft during the 1500's and 1600's when there was limited understanding of the cause of devastating events, such as sickness, deaths, poor harvests, drought and disease. Such disasters were believed to be brought about by supernatural forces which resulted in scapegoats, witches, being blamed.

Books about Astrology, Alchemy and Magic were available and increased the interest in witchcraft, witches and witch hunts. "Malleus Maleficarum" was published as guide used for the torture and persecution of witches. It was a best-selling book, only being out-sold by the Bible.

Salem Massachusetts



Look for how the world of Salem is created on stage



[http://www.primestage.com/shows\\_and\\_tickets/2015\\_2016.1\\_set.html](http://www.primestage.com/shows_and_tickets/2015_2016.1_set.html)



## Arthur Miller Biography

Screenwriter, Playwright (1915–2005)

Born in Harlem, New York in 1915, Arthur Miller attended the University of Michigan before moving back East to write dramas for the stage. His first critical and popular success was *Death of a Salesman*, which opened on Broadway in 1949 and won the Pulitzer Prize along with multiple Tony awards. He received more acclaim for his award-winning follow-up *The Crucible*, which reflected his unwavering refusal to cooperate with the House of Un-American Activities Committee. Miller's public life was painted in part by his rocky marriage to

Hollywood sex symbol Marilyn Monroe. The playwright died in 2005 at the age of 89, leaving a body of work that continues to be re-staged internationally and adapted for the screen.

### 'The Crucible' & McCarthyism

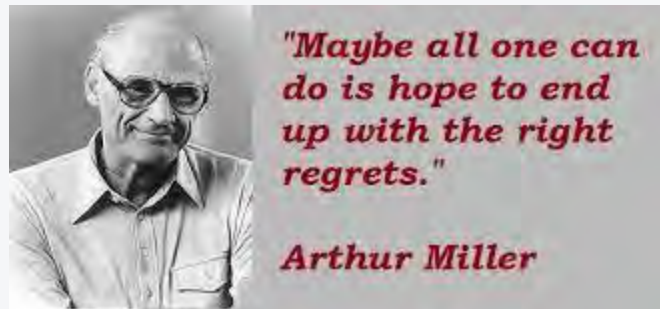
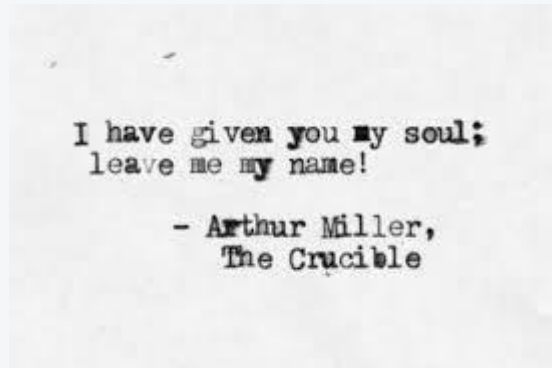
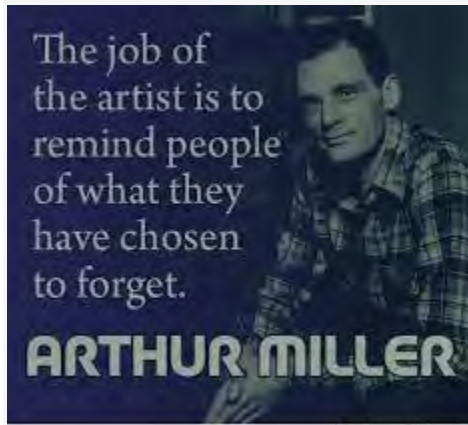
Later in 1956, the House of Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) refused to renew Miller's passport, and called him in to appear before the committee. His 1953 play, the Tony Award-winning *The Crucible*, a dramatization of the Salem witch trials of 1692 and an allegory of [McCarthyism](#), was believed to be one of the reasons why Miller came under the committee's scrutiny. Miller refused to comply with the committee's demands to "out" people who had been active in certain political activities and was thus cited in contempt of Congress.

In 1957, Brooks Atkinson wrote about Miller's stand against HUAC: "He refused to be an informer. He refused to turn his private conscience over to administration by the state. He has accordingly been found in contempt of Congress. That is the measure of the man who has written these high-minded plays." The contempt ruling was overturned two years later.

Miller's plays have become American classics that continue to speak to new generations of audiences. *Death of a Salesman* has had numerous screen adaptations, including a 1985 TV version that starred Dustin Hoffman who also starred in the previous year's Broadway revival. In 1996, a film adaptation of *The Crucible* hit theaters, starring Winona Ryder, Joan Allen and Daniel Day-Lewis. Miller penned the screenplay, which earned him the sole Academy Award nomination of his career.

**Why I wrote *The Crucible*?** An article in *The New Yorker*, October 21, 1996.

<http://www.plosin.com/beatbegins/archive/MillerCrucible.htm>



The Salem Witchcraft Trials last for three months from June to September. Accusations of witchcraft were made against both men and women in Essex, Suffolk, and Middlesex counties of colonial Massachusetts. The Salem Witchcraft Trials resulted in 19 people being sentenced to death by hanging in Puritan Massachusetts.

One old man was pressed to death under heavy stones for refusing to submit to a trial on witchcraft charges.  
**Look for who this is in the play.**







## Dramatizing History in Miller's *The Crucible*

"Witchcraft Victims on the Way to the Gallows," by F.C. Yoyan, appeared in the *Boston Herald*, May 14, 1930. Credit: Image courtesy of [Witchcraft in a Salem Village](#).

*Witchcraft was hung, in History,  
But History and I  
Find all the Witchcraft that we need  
Around us, every Day— Emily Dickinson, #1583.*

In their book *Salem Possessed*, Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum remark upon the prominent place the Salem witch trials have in America's cultural consciousness. They observe, "for most Americans the episode ranks in familiarity somewhere between Plymouth Rock and Custer's last stand". Moreover, they note that because of the trials' dramatic elements, "it is no coincidence that the Salem witch trials are best known today through the work of a playwright, not a historian . . . When Arthur Miller published *The Crucible* in the early 1950s, he simply outdid the historians at their own game".

The goal is to examine the ways in which Miller interpreted the facts of the witch trials and successfully dramatized them. Our inquiry into this matter will be guided by aesthetic and dramatic concerns as we attempt to interpret history and examine Miller's own interpretations of it. In this guide, students should examine some of Miller's historical sources: biographies of key players (the accused and the accusers) and transcripts of the Salem Witch trials themselves. The students should also read a summary of the historical events in Salem and study a map. The students will then read *The Crucible* itself.

By closely reading historical documents and attempting to interpret them, students will be able to put themselves in the place of playwrights; that is, they will be able to look at historical events and the people involved with them and ask, what makes these trials so compelling? What is it about this particular tragic segment of American history that appeals to the creative imagination? How can history be dramatic, and how can drama bring history to life? A reading of *The Crucible* will reveal how one playwright not only "outdid the historians at their own game," but also created an authentic American tragic hero.

As students examine historical materials with an eye to their dramatic potential, they can also explore the central questions of psychology and society that so fascinated Miller. Why were the leaders of Salem's clerical and civil community ready to condemn to death 19 people, who refused to acknowledge being witches, based on spectral evidence and the hysterical words of young girls? Why would the church and government authorities continue to credit these wild and unsubstantiated stories as respectable people from all walks of life—landowners, women of independent means, neighbors, even clergy—were arrested and brought to trial? What was it about the time period that made such hysteria, and ultimately tragedy, possible?

## LESSON PLANS FOR *THE CRUCIBLE*

### WORKSHOP I

#### Theatrical Warm-up and Get students engaged!

**Objective:** Students will develop physical awareness as it relates to self-expression and vocal production. Stretching limbers the muscles and connective tissues so that they can move with the demands of any dramatic situation.

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**Procedure:**

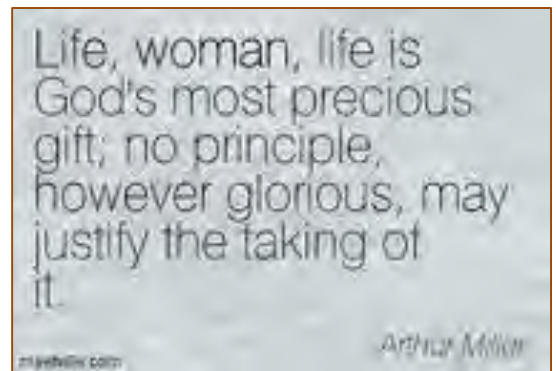
- Begin with movement/vocal warm-up

Start with head/neck roles

The Puppet –

1. Stand in a circle with some room around you to move.
2. Imagine a string is attached to each of your shoulders. Let the string pull your shoulders up to the ceiling. Try and touch the ceiling with your shoulders. Really try.
3. Now imagine the string is attached to your elbows. Let it lift your elbows to the ceiling. Try and touch the ceiling with your elbows.
4. Now imagine the string is attached to your wrists. Try and touch the ceiling with your wrists.
5. Now imagine the string is attached to your fingertips. Try and touch the ceiling with your fingertips. Stretch and reach to the ceiling.
6. Release your spine from the waist with a big “uhhh” sound. Hang bent over at the waist like a rag doll, relaxing everything in your body but those few muscles required to keep you on your feet.
7. Breathe a big sigh and let out any tension remaining.
8. Now roll up your spine, stacking one vertebra atop the other. Leave your head, shoulders and arms released until the very last minute when your head will float into place above the spine.
9. Breathe another big sigh and release the tension.
10. Repeat the entire exercise double time.

**6-8 minutes**      -----



## VOCABULARY – READING AND RESPONDING TO TEXT

**Objective:** Students will strengthen inter-personal skills with knowledge of vocabulary used in different ways throughout their reading and writing. Using and understanding different vocabulary will also expedite comprehension and focus. It allows for **audibility:** projecting your voice so your audience can hear and understand you; **pronunciation:** recognizing words before you say them and pronounce all sounds correctly; **articulation:** using your tongue, mouth and lips to pronounce all the sounds correctly; **vocal variety/expression:** using appropriate pitch, volume and flow.

### Pennsylvania Academic Standards for Reading, Writing, Listening, Speaking

The following standards are addressed in this lesson plan:

**1.6.11.A:** Listen critically and respond to others in small and large group situations. Respond with grade level appropriate questions, ideas, information or opinions.

**1.6.11.C:** Demonstrate awareness of audience using appropriate volume and clarity in formal speaking presentations.

**1.6.11.D:** Listen to and acknowledge the contributions of other students well introducing ideas and opinions to enrich the discussion

### Vocabulary

Miller has a seemingly endless vocabulary to describe the downfall of a community that begins with the indiscretions of John Proctor and Abigail Williams.

Divide class into teams. Use vocabulary cards and distribute copies to the students for example:

Enrapture – hold spellbound

Lechery – unrestrained indulgence in adulterous activity

Agape – with the mouth wide open as in wonder or awe

Inferno – any place of pain and turmoil

Exude – release in drops or small quantities

Snivel – cry or whine with snuffling

Dwindle – become smaller or lose substance

Budge – move very slightly

Amaze – affect with wonder

Baffle – be a mystery or bewildering to

Stench – a distinctive odor that is offensively unpleasant

Ask students to refer to the definitions they wrote on their vocabulary cards to answer each question below. The questions require them to apply the meaning of the words to their own experiences.

1. What is an experience that you find **enrapturing**?
2. When have you seen something that gave a **stench**?
3. Describe a **sniveling** character from a movie.
4. Tell about an **amazing** event from the news.
5. What would you describe with the word **baffle**?

**20 minutes**

## Analyze Theme

### Community vs Individual

Salem is a tight-knit community where there is no such thing as private business. Individual activities like church attendance or book reading or keeping poppets become admissible evidence in court. Miller speculates that the community of Salem sought to keep itself together by casting out undesirable individuals, and in so doing created the atmosphere necessary for the witch hunts. The court itself was an extension of this principle, desperately in search of external validity – Danforth cannot possibly exonerate some when others have already perished for the same crime. But for the accused, it is only the individual that matters. In the end, Proctor is left with nothing but his name and reputation.

Use the statement above to support students in examining the theme in *the Crucible*. Ask them to list the traits and actions of both “characters” as they read. When they have finished the story, ask students to state its theme in one or two sentences using the traits from their list as support. Guide a discussion, encouraging students to share their answers and evidence.

1. Divide students into teams
2. Using all the characters in the Crucible distribute “Character” cards to the teams.
3. Allow them to discuss amongst themselves for 4 minutes how the characters contribute to the theme and movement of the play.

**19-20 minutes**

#### **Petition of John Proctor**

**SALEM-PRISON, July 23, 1692.**

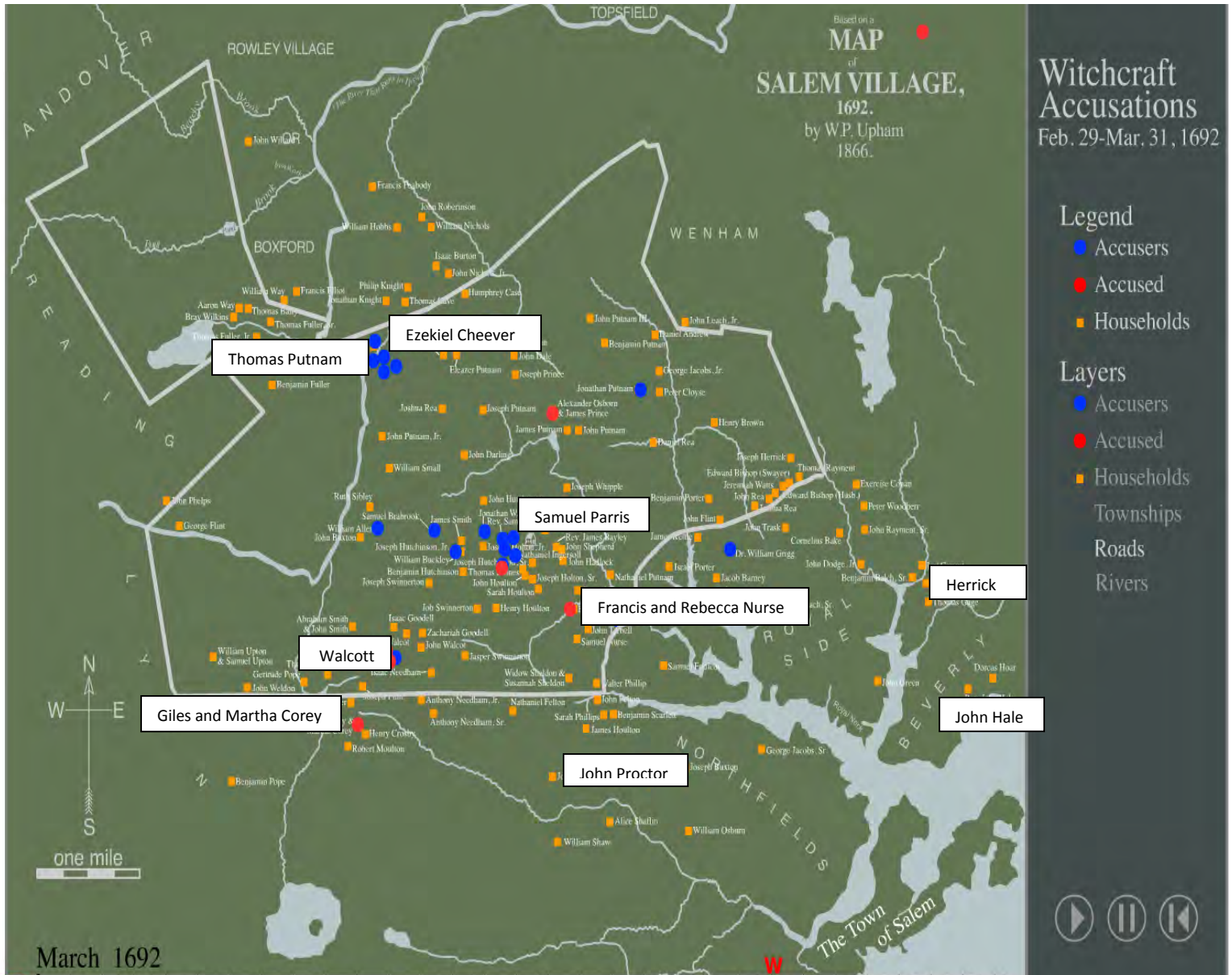
**Mr. Mather, Mr. Allen, Mr. Moody, Mr. Willard, and Mr. Bailey**

**Reverend Gentlemen.**

**The innocency of our Case with the Enmity of our Accusers and our Judges, and Jury, whom nothing but our Innocent blood will serve their turn, having Condemned us already before our Tryals, being so much incensed and engaged against us by the Devil, makes us bold to Beg and Implore your Favourable Assistance of this our Humble Petition to his Excellency, The Magistrates, Ministers, Jewries, and all the People in general, being so much iraged and incensed against us by the Delusion of the Devil, which we can term no other, by reason we know in our own Consciences, we are all Innocent Persons. here are five Persons who have lately confessed themselves to be Witches, and do accuse some of us, of being along with them at a Sacrament, since we were committed into close Prison, which we know to be Lies. My son William Proctor, when he was examin'd, because he would not confess that he was Guilty, when he was Innocent, they tyed him Neck and Heels till the Blood gushed out of his Nose, and would have kept him so 24 Hours, if one more Merciful than the rest, had not taken pity on him, and caused him to be unbound. They have already undone us in our Estates, and that will not serve their turns, without our Innocent Bloods. If it cannot be granted that we can have our Trials at Boston, we humbly beg that you would endeavour to have these Magistrates changed, and others in their rooms, begging also and beseeching you would be pleased to be here, if not all, some of you at our Trials, hoping thereby you may be the means of saving the shedding our Innocent Bloods, desiring your Prayers to the Lord in our behalf, we rest your Poor Afflicted Servants, JOHN PROCTOR, etc.**

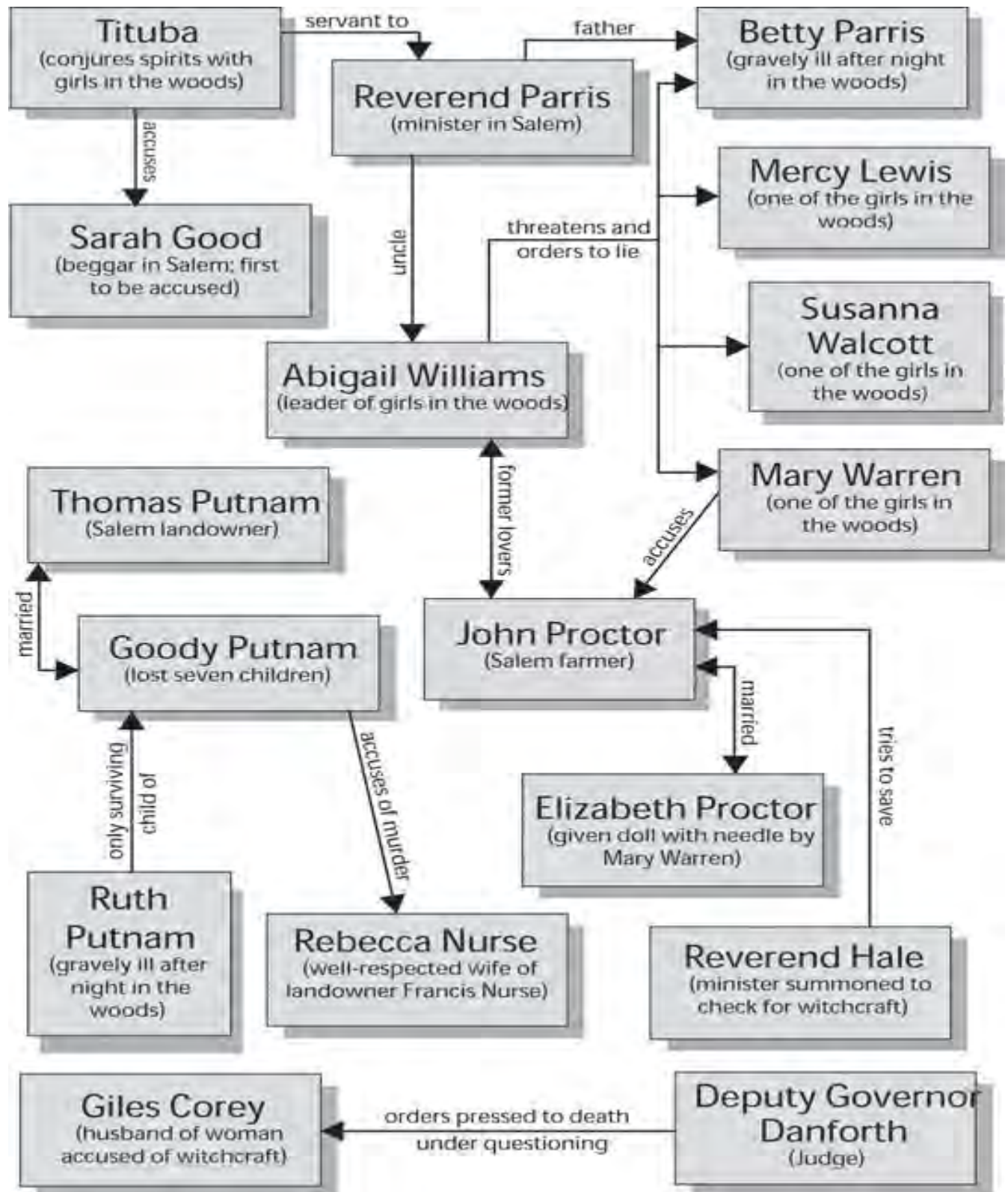
# Map of Salem Massachusetts

<http://salem.lib.virginia.edu/maps/salem.swf>



1692 Salem Village had about 600 inhabitants.

## WHO'S WHO IN THE CRUCIBLE



## WORKSHOP II

**Objective:** Students will develop physical awareness as it relates to self-expression and vocal production. Stretching limbers the muscles and connective tissues so that they can move with the demands of any dramatic situation.

**Procedure:**

- Begin with movement/vocal warm-up from Workshop I

**6-8 minutes**

**Theatre Game:**

**Observing Change**

This exercise focuses entirely on your power of observation. It becomes more difficult for your partner as your attention to detail improves. This exercise will all also discipline the student to focus and observe the performance for comprehension and clarity.

1. Sit on the classroom floor across from a partner.
2. Spend two minutes observing everything about your partner in as much detail as possible.
3. Turn away. Your partner will then change three small things about his or her appearance.
4. Turn back when your partner is ready.
5. Try and guess the three changes.
6. Switch roles.

This exercise can be done with four students at a time so that the class can observe changes.

**20 minutes**

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**Objective:** Training students on how to be an “audience” member.

### Theatre Etiquette

1. Bring in a playbill – explain the importance of reading the contents of the Playbill.
2. Bring in picture of the set – explain the importance of observing the set and how important it is to the movement and tone of the play.

Explain how important it is to respect performers on stage by being quiet and listening to the performance. Students will learn the proper way to attend a theatrical performance by being observant and focused on the playbill, the set the language and will thus have an enjoyable experience and be able to ask intelligent questions at the Q&A after the performance.

**20 minutes    END Workshop II**

## WORKSHOP III

### AFTER THE PRODUCTION

#### Evaluation, Reflection and Comprehension

**Objective:** To evaluate the learning experience of the play and comprehension quality of the experience. Reflections on student experience.

**Procedure:** Initiate and participate with students in collaborative discussion on various aspects of the play. A Q & A period on paper and/or verbally for the entire session.

To properly evaluate the learning experience for the students, the Education Director or Instructor can pose questions on paper from Workshops I and II and the theatre experience. This will be distributed at the end or during this Workshop to be picked up at a later by the Education Director.

#### 40 minutes

We encourage you and your students to explore these topics further by checking out the following resources regarding *The Crucible*:

#### Readings In and Around *The Crucible*

#### More about America in the 17th Century

*Colonial Living* by Edwin Tunis

Thomas Y. Crowell Company. New York. 1957

An old (but not out-dated) book rich with details of everyday life in Colonial America, with excellent drawing of the architecture, clothing and material culture of the era.

*Writer's Guide to Everyday Life in Colonial America* by Dale Taylor

Writer's Digest Books. Cincinnati, Ohio. 1997

Detail and minutia designed for aspiring writers, but intriguing and enlightening for anyone interested in how people lived when George Washington still had teeth.

#### More about the Salem Witch Trials Witches!

*The Absolutely True Tale of Disaster in Salem* by Rosalyn Schanzer

National Geographic. Washington, DC. 2011.

Irreverent woodcuts enliven this well-researched journey into 17th century witch hunt madness.

*Witchcraft Trials: Fear, Betrayal, and Death in Salem* by Deborah Kent

Enslow Publishers. Berkeley Heights, New Jersey. 2009

How can modern readers ever know the truth; were the Salem teens victims of witches? Ergot poisoning? Some exotic bacterial infection?



## Books about Arthur Miller

*Arthur Miller* by Christopher Bigsby

Harvard University Press. Cambridge, Massachusetts. 2010

A thorough and sympathetic look at the political, professional and personal life of the writer.

**Books about "the Red Scare"**

*America in the 1950s* by Edmund Lindop and Sarah Decapua

Twenty-First Century Books. Minneapolis. 2010.

News photographs and commentary on the political and cultural events of the 1950s.

*The Cold War* by Kayla Morgan

ABDO Publishing. Edina, Minnesota. 2011

The ins and outs of the United States' complicated relationship with Communism and Communist countries from the Second World War and the fall of the Berlin Wall.

*McCarthyism : The Red Scare* by Brian Fitzgerald

Compass Point Books. Minneapolis. 2007.

The rise and fall of Senator Joseph McCarthy and his "witch hunt" for American Communists, real and imagined.

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Reading list provided by

[Northland Public Library](http://www.northlandlibrary.org)



Also check out the link below from an interview with Arthur Miller

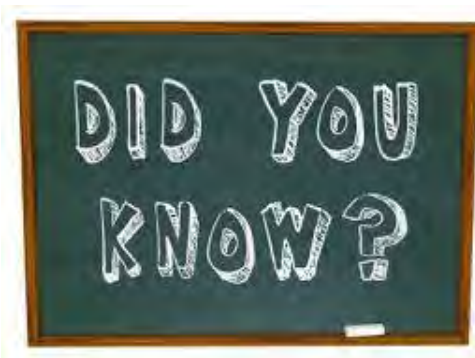
*The Harvard Crimson*

**Miller Recounts McCarthy Era, Origins of "The Crucible"**

By KEVIN E. MEYERS, CRIMSON STAFF WRITER May 12, 1999

<http://www.thecrimson.com/article/1999/5/12/miller-recounts-mccarthy-era-origins-of/>

Salem Witch Trials Documentary Archive <http://salem.lib.virginia.edu/home.html>



The Salem Witch Trials took many innocent victims and resulted in:

- 100-200 arrests
- The Execution of 19 convicted witches
- One man pressed to death
- One man stoned to death
- Two dogs were executed as suspected accomplices of witches (familiars).

## Things to look for when watching the production



### Lighting Designer JR. Shaw's Design concept

Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* dramatizes the events of the Salem Witch Trials. The action of the play focuses on a few key characters and explores the causes and consequences of a heavily regulated world releasing its pent up repression and suppression. It challenges the audience to explore the relationship between order and truth; what it takes to survive in society versus what is good for the soul.

The lighting of the play has two main objectives; to reflect the conflicted and unsettled nature of the play's world and to give a deep sense of focus. This is a world that has been torn apart and reassembled, but the pieces no longer quite fit together. Rather than striving for realism, the style of the lighting will be expressionistic and abstracted from the natural world.

Strong beams of light, as if shooting through the windows or the rafters, will represent the harsh and narrowness of Salem society. They will drive a sense of focus and deliberation. Rather than soft, general fill for the lights, everything will have striking and deliberate angles and harder lines. Colors will be chosen for emotional impact. Frequently, the palate for natural things will be just a step removed from reality to increase a sense of unnaturalness. For example, white will be mixed into the orange of the hearth's flame. The dark purple of the night will be a mix of deep reds and blues that create opposing colored shadows.



Costume Designer, Kim Brown, measuring Jason "Spider" Matthews who plays John Proctor.

### Costume Designer Statement

In conjunction with the director's vision of the script, costumes serve a production by defining time & place as well as character identification. This is no more apparent than in "period" dramas like Arthur Miller's "The Crucible".

Particular design details for the Prime Stage cast will include combining period and modern elements (blurring the lines between events of 1682 & the 1950's anti-communist hysteria that inspired Miller's creativity), attention to the use of textures, fabric choice and "distressing" ( a term for fabric modification).

It is my intent that costumes reflect the state of the wearer (mental & physical) as well as reflect the "breakdown" that the rampant hysteria and subsequent imprisonment of dozens caused.

The overall visual impression of this production, without strict adherence to high period, will help modern audiences assimilate Miller's message - which is still timely decades later.

Miller's language more skillfully "clothes" the actors than any costume. Little wonder "The Crucible" remains his most frequently produced play. It is a pleasure to be associated with Prime Stage in bringing this classic to a new generation.

Prime Stage's "The Crucible"  
October 2015

## Little known information about The Salem Witch Trials – 1692 and after

The witch mania began when two girls, (Betty Parris and her cousin Abigail Williams) tried fortune telling. They were staying with Betty's father, Reverend Samuel Parris. During the winter they and their friends dabbled with fortune telling by cracking eggs into a glass and interpreting the shapes.

Parris owned a slave called Tituba. She was an Arawak Indian. (Tituba is described as a 'black slave'. In fact, there is no evidence that she was black). She *may* have been present when the fortune telling took place. It has also been suggested that Tituba told the girls tales about witchcraft and influenced them.

By 20 January 1692 the two girls were having strange fits. A doctor called William Griggs was called but he was unable to explain the fits. He claimed the girls were bewitched. Unfortunately he started a chain of events. Later several other girls began to have fits, 18 year old Elizabeth Booth, 20 year old Sarah Churchill, 17 year old Elizabeth Hubbard, 19 year old Mercy Lewis, 12 year old Ann Putnam, 18 year old Susan Sheldon, 16 year old Mary Walcott, 20 year old Mary Warren.



Meanwhile, on 25 February Mary Sibley persuaded Tituba and her husband John to bake a 'witch cake'. It was made from rye and the urine of Betty Parris and Abigail Williams. In those days people believed that if you suspected a person was bewitched, you could make a witch cake and feed it to a dog. If the dog behaved like the afflicted person, it was proof that witchcraft was the cause. In this case a dog was given the cake and its behavior afterwards was said to be like that of the afflicted girls. This was taken as evidence that witchcraft was indeed responsible.

The girls then 'identified' those responsible. They blamed three women, Tituba, the slave, Sarah Good and Sarah Osborne. All three women had low status. If the girls had accused respected members of the community they might not have been believed. Tituba was a slave. Sarah Good was poor and begged for food. Sarah Osborne had not been to church for a year.

On 1 March, Judge John Hathorne and Judge Jonathan Corwin examined them. Sarah Good and Sarah Osborne denied the charges but Tituba confessed. Tituba was imprisoned for a while but she was not executed. Once the witch hysteria was over Tituba withdrew her confession. The two other women continued to deny any involvement in witchcraft. Sarah Osborne died in prison while awaiting trial.

The first person to be executed was Bridget Bishop. She was controversial. She had been married three times and ran two taverns. Worse, she had been tried for witchcraft before, in 1680. Yet the evidence against her was feeble. It was said that dolls with pins in them were found in her house. Despite the flimsiness of the evidence the woman was convicted on 2 June. She was hanged on 10 June.

On 29 June Sarah Good and Rebecca Nurse, were tried. They were hanged on 19 July. The trial of Rebecca Nurse was a travesty. She was an old lady of good character and the jury acquitted her. However the girls who accused her of being a witch had fits or fainted. Incredibly the judge 'invited' the jury to 'reconsider' their verdict. This time they found her guilty. (Perhaps the jurors were afraid *they* would be accused of being witches unless they brought the 'right' verdict).

On 5 August, George Burroughs, George Jacobs, John and Elizabeth Proctor, were tried and found guilty. John Proctor was an outspoken man who was skeptical about the witch trials. Nevertheless it was his wife Elizabeth who was accused first. John Proctor bravely defended her and as a result *he* was accused of being a witch. John Proctor wrote a letter to the Boston clergy denouncing the unfairness of the trials. His letter probably did have some effect but unfortunately it did not save his life. Elizabeth Proctor was spared because she was pregnant but the others were hanged on August 19. Before John Proctor died he said the Lord's Prayer (the 'Our Father'), without making any mistakes. Witches were not supposed to be able to do that and he ignited doubt in many people's minds. Some people demanded that Burroughs should be set free but Cotton Mather managed to persuade the people to go ahead and hang him.

Giles Corey was pressed to death on 19 September. Finally on 22 September Martha Corey, Mary East, Alice Parker, Mary Parker, Wilmot Reed, Margaret Scott and Samuel Waddell were hanged.

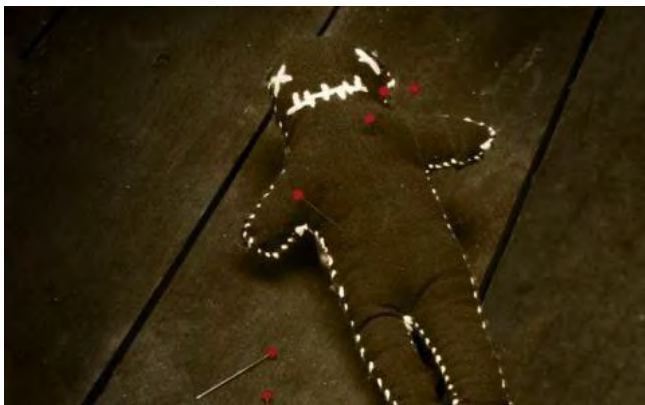


In 1696 some jurors admitted they had made a terrible mistake.

In 1697 a day of fasting and praying for forgiveness was held. It was called the Day of Official Humiliation. One of the judges who presided over the witch trials, Samuel Sewall, publicly apologized.

In 1702 the General Court (legislature) of Massachusetts overturned the convictions for witchcraft and in 1711 they granted compensation to the relatives of the victims bringing the whole sorry episode to an end. In the early 18th century belief in witches died out.

Finally in 1992 a memorial was erected to those who were wrongly executed at Salem.



A poppet

# The Crucible

## Anticipation/Reaction Guide

**Part I Directions:** Prior to reading or seeing *The Crucible*, in the “Before” column, respond to each statement by putting a plus sign (+) if you agree with it, a minus sign (-) if you disagree, and a question mark (?) if you are unsure of your belief.

**Part II Directions:** For one of the statements below, write a Deep Thoughts response of 500 words or more as to why you have the belief you do.

**Part III Directions:** After reading or seeing the story, in the “After” column respond again to the statements. Then, reply by writing a 500 words or more Deep Thoughts response to a statement where your belief changed since reading the play. If not, write about a different statement than you responded to in Part II.

<b>Before</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>After</b>
1.____	Confessing to a crime you didn't commit in order to avoid punishment is wise.	1.____
2.____	The difference between right and wrong is clear.	2.____
3.____	It is better to die for what you believe in rather than to lie to save your life.	3.____
4.____	There is only one correct way to interpret the Bible.	4.____
5.____	That which doesn't destroy us only makes us stronger.	5.____
6.____	It's more difficult to forgive yourself if the person you have hurt doesn't forgive you.	6.____
7.____	Courage means doing something even though it can be difficult and fearsome.	7.____
8.____	A person is innocent until proven guilty.	8.____
9.____	Beliefs in opposition to common values should be illegal.	9.____
10.____	Justice is best determined in a court of law.	10.____

## Questions and activities to go deeper into *The Crucible*

Why is it easier to relinquish responsibility for your actions when you are part of a group?

What is a crucible? How is it used? Justify Miller's use of *The Crucible* as a title for his play.

As a representative of the state government, is Danforth neutral and fair? How would his statement, "Do you know, Mr. Proctor that the entire contention of the state in these trials is that the voice of Heaven is speaking through the children?" be received in a court today? Why was it received as valid in Salem in 1692?

Why does Danforth rejoice when Proctor confesses? What does this imply about the purpose of the trials? Why must Danforth hang Proctor? Pretend you are Danforth and justify your actions.

Explain why Proctor's knowledge that "the children's sickness had naught to do with witchcraft" did not stop the witch hunt and court proceedings. Pretend you are Proctor and make his case as it would be done today.

Write a one-act play in which a student is caught breaking the school code of ethics and must face a court of his or her peers. Make clear in your scene which rights the student has and which he or she does not.

Create an advertising campaign for a new presentation of the play. Include posters, news releases, radio and TV spots.

Stage an interview with Abigail or Mary Warren or Elizabeth Proctor in which the class asks questions and she responds.

Set up a "Talk Show" in which Abigail, Proctor, and other characters recount the events which made them famous.

Using the list you made of unusual expressions used in the play, rewrite some of Miller's lines as they would be said by young people today.

<http://www.penguin.com/static/pdf/teachersguides/crucible.pdf>

### Modern day "witch hunts"

- [The Tucson Witch Hunt](#)  
Column by Charles M. Blow on the "full-fledged witch hunt to link the shooter to the right" in the aftermath of the attempted assassination of Representative Gabrielle Giffords, with references to "The Crucible" (2011).
- [When Suspicion of Teachers Ran Unchecked](#)  
Article on the blacklisting of public school teachers in New York City (2009).
- [In Small Town, "Grease" Ignites a Culture War](#)  
Article about a Missouri high school drama group banned from performing "The Crucible" (2006).
- [Witch Hunt in the Navy](#)  
Opinion piece on the Tailhook scandal and its effects throughout the Navy (1992).

## The Resource Guide Teacher Evaluation Form

Prime Stage constantly assesses the work provided by our education department. Your feedback is vital to our ongoing need for funding for this program. Please fill out the following forms and mail or email them to the address given below. Thank you.

YOUR NAME \_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF SCHOOL \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

Which part(s) of the play and experience you find most helpful for you and your students?

Was the guide useful to you?

Which part(s) did you find most helpful?

How can we improve the theatrical for the future?

Please go to our website: [www.primestage.com](http://www.primestage.com) to find this form and send it back directly online! Or you can mail it to us at: Prime Stage Theatre P.O. Box 99446 Pittsburgh, PA 15233

## The Resource Guide Student Evaluation Form

YOUR NAME \_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF SCHOOL \_\_\_\_\_

GRADE \_\_\_\_\_ NAME OF TEACHER \_\_\_\_\_

What part/parts of this story did you enjoy when you seeing the play?

What part/parts of this play confused you while reading or watching the play?

What part/parts of the stage version helped you understand the book?

What did you learn from reading or seeing this play?

Which character would you like to play?